

**Appropriations Committee
February 19, 2013
Testimony of
Erika Tindill, Chair
Board of Pardons and Paroles**

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Erika Tindill, Chair of the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

As you are aware, the Board of Pardons and Paroles is a separate state agency attached to the Department of Correction for administrative purposes only (see C.G.S. §54-124a). Our \$5.8M appropriation appears as a line item in the DOC budget. This is down from \$6.3M the agency had when I started 20 months ago.

In 2012, the Board of Pardons and Paroles implemented a structured decision-making process that results in a written decision for every discretionary release. The legislative requirement to adopt this evidence-based practice came out of a statutory change in 2004. Additional legislation passed in January of 2008 requiring the Department of Correction (DOC), the Board of Pardons and Paroles, and the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch to collaborate on static and dynamic risk assessment and customize a tool to best meet the needs of the state. The Board, in collaboration with the DOC and CSSD, ultimately settled on Canada's Carleton University's Structured Parole Decision-Making (SPDM) framework and the University of Cincinnati's Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS).

The ORAS was renamed SCORES – the Statewide Collaborative Risk Evaluation System – and is currently in the second phase of implementation. An Oversight Team meets regularly to monitor and support the work of six implementation workgroups (Offender Classification, Communications, Policy, Training, Quality Assurance, and Customization). The similarity of the SCORES to the LSI-R assessment currently being used by CSSD allows for both tools to be part of the same assessment system due to the similarity of domains (those that are dynamic and have been shown to be directly correlated to an offender's risk for reoffending). The Board collaborated with Dr. Ralph Serin of Carleton University to revise our parole interview and summary to specifically address each of the domains being considered by board members when making release decisions. This new Decision Information Summary (DIS) is designed to track the domains of the SCORES risk assessment tool.

This is a very different process than the one previously utilized by the Board – parole officers preparing packages for review by board members are shifting from the collection and assembly of information and documents to assessment and analysis of an offender's risk factors and needs. The purpose for the change is to more accurately determine which offenders should be released to parole supervision. The overarching goal is to significantly reduce recidivism rates.

The Board's newly established Planning, Research, and Development (PRD) Unit has begun the process of coding the data provided by panel members' SPDM worksheets and validating the instrument against the Connecticut offender population. Analysis of the structured decision-making and SCORES data will be conducted to measure the effect of the new assessment and processes on the Board's decisions.

You should be aware that the agency has been able to accomplish all of this within its reduced budget.

Commissioner Arnone and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.